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                      UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
                     FOR THE DISTRICT OF NEW JERSEY
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                                   CIVIL ACTION NUMBER:
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    IN RE: VALSARTAN PRODUCTS
                                   19-md-02875-RBK-KMW
    LIABILITY LITIGATION
                                   CASE MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE
 5
                                   via ZOOM VIDEOCONFERENCE
 6
         Mitchell H. Cohen Building & U.S. Courthouse
         4th & Cooper Streets
 7
         Camden, New Jersey 08101
         January 18, 2022
 8
         Commencing at 4:00 p.m.
 9
    BEFORE:
                            THE HONORABLE THOMAS I. VANASKIE (RET.)
                            SPECIAL MASTER
10
    APPEARANCES:
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      Proceedings recorded by mechanical stenography; transcript
               produced by computer-aided transcription.
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    A P P E A R A N C E S (Continued):
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         and Actavis Pharma, Inc.
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(PROCEEDINGS held via Zoom videoconference before The Honorable
Thomas I. Vanaskie (Ret.), Special Master, at 4:00 p.m.)
         JUDGE VANASKIE: All right. Well, let's get started.
         Good afternoon, everyone. Now is the time that's been
appointed for us to have our status conference or discovery
status conference. We are going to also hear argument on the
question of whether 11 documents in question should be sealed.
We're going to talk a little bit about letters I received today
dealing with some follow-up discovery. Specifically, I would
like to address the question of the time limits or amount of
time to be allotted for that additional discovery, the
additional depositions, some logistics with respect to those
depositions. I'd like to address some questions that have been
raised with respect to the logistics of some expert witness
depositions, so we'll talk about that as well, in terms of who
can attend, things of that nature.
         So we'll proceed with this call in two stages.
first stage will cover the matters that can be discussed
without concerns about confidentiality; and then after we've
concluded that part of our conversation, we'll dial in to our
normal dial-in number and conduct an in camera discussion with
respect to the confidentiality issues or the issues that deal
with confidentiality.
         So I take it, Mr. Slater, you'll be the spokesperson
for the plaintiffs for the most part?
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             MR. SLATER: Only the issues we're going to win, Your
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    Honor.
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             JUDGE VANASKIE: Okay. All right. And, Ms. Lockard,
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    will you be addressing this for the defense on the questions
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    that you're going to win?
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             MS. LOCKARD: I would like to think so, Your Honor,
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    but I think I'm addressing the deposition logistics and the
    expert witness issues.
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                              Okay. Very well.
             JUDGE VANASKIE:
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             All right. There seems to be agreement -- I'm going
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    to head into the agenda letter. If you're not being addressed,
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    I will ask you to mute your microphone and we'll proceed from
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    there. Again, please don't put us on hold because we don't
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    want to listen to that music.
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             The first item I wanted to talk about deals with the
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    dismissal of Rite Aid and Walgreen's from the Medical
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    Monitoring Master Complaint.
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             I take it there's no issue there? You're going to
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    proceed, Mr. Slater, and have them dismissed?
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             MR. SLATER: It wasn't one of my issues, Your Honor,
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    but I believe that's already been taken care of and I think
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    maybe a stipulation was filed or it's going to be shortly.
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             JUDGE VANASKIE: Mr. Stanoch, you showed up on my
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             Is this your issue?
    screen.
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             MR. STANOCH: It is, Your Honor. Good afternoon.
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    Yes, Your Honor is correct, there is no disagreement. In fact,
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    we filed the joint stipulation and proposed order about 35, 40
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    minutes ago, so nothing to discuss today, I believe.
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             JUDGE VANASKIE: All right. Very well.
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             MR. STANOCH: You're welcome.
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             JUDGE VANASKIE: Now let's talk about the deposition
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    logistics for plaintiffs' class certification experts. And I
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    quess we're talking now in particular about Mr. Najafi and Ms.
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            They would like to be deposed remotely. It doesn't
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    seem to be that there is any dispute that the witness
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    preference shouldn't control, but maybe I'm wrong on that.
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             So who will be addressing this? Is it you, Ms.
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    Lockard, who will be addressing this?
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             MS. LOCKARD: Yes, Your Honor.
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             JUDGE VANASKIE: All right.
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             MS. LOCKARD: So our position is, you know, obviously,
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    if there is a legitimate need to conduct a remote deposition,
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    you know, we're amenable to that. We don't want to be
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    unreasonable. But we don't -- you know, in terms of just
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    simply witness preference, and, you know, I'd like to say these
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    are unprecedented times but they're starting to feel
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    precedented because I feel like we keep coming to this same
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    issue, but given the fluidity with the situation, how this is
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    changing, it's difficult to really say, I think, today what
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    should happen for a deposition that's taking place 30 days from
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    now or even three weeks from now.
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             So our position in response to the request for Ron
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    Najafi and Laura Craft was that let's revisit this closer in
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    time, see if the position has changed. We do see numbers going
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    down in major cities with Omicron, so it's our hope that we
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    would be able to get past this and proceed with an in-person
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    deposition, which has always been defendants' preference.
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             If there is a strong preference by the witness, you
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    know, with some legitimacy, we will honor that; but we just
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    don't want that to be the default that now because there is
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    another way that we are -- you know, we're having to take all
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    of these remotely, and we certainly don't want it to be the
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    position that we have to take all of plaintiffs' expert
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    depositions via remote Zoom depositions but then they are
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    entitled to come and take all of ours live in person.
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             So we're trying to take it on a case-by-case basis,
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    you know, given the state of the data at the time of the
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    deposition.
19
             That's the best way I can present it at this point in
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    time.
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             JUDGE VANASKIE: Thank you.
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             Ms. Hilton, you are addressing this issue?
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             MS. HILTON: I am, Your Honor.
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             I think part of our concern, in listening to Ms.
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    Lockard speak, is she references legitimate rational reasons
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for why the witness should want to proceed with a remote deposition.

As we understood from previous guidance from this Court, there should really be no issue if the defending attorney, and we have so agreed in these two instances, is also appearing remotely. As we stated in our letter, Ms. Craft is taking care of a newborn infant so this is part of the reason why she wishes to proceed remotely to limit her exposure to other people.

You know, we're not opposed to revisiting the issue but I guess our question is what happens in two weeks or a week before the deposition if we say, you know, these two witnesses continue to wish to proceed remotely and the defendants say no. I think we sort of wanted to get an issue settled on this so we sort of had guidance for the rest of, you know, both their depositions -- experts' depositions and ours in terms of understanding whether these should be permitted. We didn't actually think this was a controversial request.

JUDGE VANASKIE: I thought we had laid down a general rule of witness preference, and if the witness expressed a preference to be deposed remotely, we would defer to that without necessarily questioning whether that's a rational decision.

I think about I have a 17-year-old stepson, a football player, who won't get vaccinated because he's afraid of

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needles. Now, that's irrational but it's legitimate. And I don't want to get into these questions about whether it's -- or I should say it's genuine, it's a genuine fear. I really don't want to get into deciding whether somebody's express preference is rational or genuine. If it's their preference, given these still unusual times, although, as you said, Ms. Lockard, not that much unprecedented now, but these unusual times, we'll defer to that witness's request.
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Now, I don't think there's anything inappropriate about asking the witness one week prior to the deposition what is your preference. I think you could still proceed with noticing physical presence depositions; but when the witness expresses a preference for a remote deposition, that preference will be honored.

In this case, the one witness, Ms. Craft, has a young child, a two-year-old or something like that, she's taking care of, I get that, I understand that problem. That affects all of us. I have a three-year-old grandson who was diagnosed with COVID. It happens. So I understand all of that.

So we are going to go with witness preference. I think, Ms. Hilton, there's nothing wrong with having these depositions scheduled in person, noticed to be in person, subject to your letting the other side know that the witness prefers that it be remote. There should be a deadline. I think one week in advance of letting the defense know is

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reasonable. And so we'll proceed along those lines.

Now, another question has come up with respect to these depositions and that is questioning by multiple defense counsel, that is that some of -- as I understand it, some of these expert witnesses offer testimony specific to individual defendants and, obviously, their counsel will want to have the opportunity to question those persons.

Now, my understanding here, and I'll ask somebody to weigh in on this so I make sure I'm understanding it correctly, and that is that we'll still limit ourselves to no more than three persons in the deposition room when it's being conducted in person, but there can be counsel moving in and out to adhere to those limits, but giving individual counsel an opportunity to ask questions specific to their respective clients.

Are there any questions with respect to that? MS. HILTON: Your Honor, if I may, on that particular point, I just -- you know, in the interest of raising our concerns about this arrangement of having a rotating group of people who come in and out, I do believe there are some concerns about the exposure, right? You know, in the previous -- as we understood it, we were limiting the exposure for a witness to an absolute number of people but under the defendants' proposal of having people rotate in the deposition, that exposure, especially once you consider travel and flights and people coming from all across the country to attend the

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deposition, that exposure becomes exponentially higher. that is one of our concerns with the idea of having sort of an at bat of people coming into the room. And so I just wanted to raise that because this was a concern that witnesses have raised with us, so I would be remiss if I didn't raise it with Your Honor.

JUDGE VANASKIE: Well, the ground rule, let me repeat it, just to make sure we're all operating with the same understanding, is that the inquiring attorneys have to be fully vaccinated. So that I think mitigates to some degree that concern. And let me make it clear: Fully vaccinated means both doses and a booster so that we consider them to have taken all the precautions that they could.

I know there are still break-through cases for people who have been boostered up and that happens and I get that concern. On the other hand, when there are opinions being expressed that are particular to a specific defendant or group of defendants, their lawyer should have the right to be there to question the witness when they're being conducted in person.

So I won't limit it to three attorneys asking I understand the concern but I think we've taken questions. all of the precautions necessary while also respecting the rights of a particular defendant or group of defendants.

So we won't have more than three in the room but it can rotate to accomplish that.

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             MS. HILTON: Thank you, Your Honor.
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             JUDGE VANASKIE: Now, there is also a question with
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    respect to remote depositions, and that is that the defending
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    counsel must be remote as well, that is, not present with the
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    deponent. And that I believe is fair and appropriate.
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    will make -- if we haven't made that clear before, I'd like to
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    make it clear now. If there's some objections, please express
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    that now.
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             MS. HILTON: Your Honor, I do believe of the I think
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    seven depositions that we provided dates for, it's only two
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    where we're seeking to proceed remotely and then those two we
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    have agreed, which was part of why we didn't realize this would
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    be a dispute we would have to bring to Your Honor, but we did
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    agree to also proceed remotely as well in defending.
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             JUDGE VANASKIE: Right, I have seen that. Just to
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    make it clear going forward, you know, it's a fluid situation
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    and in case another witness becomes remote, that would be the
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    ground rule for that witness as well. All right?
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             MS. HILTON: Thank you, Your Honor.
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             JUDGE VANASKIE: Anything else on deposition
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    logistics?
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             MS. LOCKARD: Not that comes to mind. Thank you,
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    Judge.
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             JUDGE VANASKIE: Thank you, Ms. Hilton.
                                                       Thank you,
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    Ms. Lockard.
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Will this be you, Mr. Slater?

MR. SLATER: It will, Your Honor. And not to try to rush the argument but I didn't realize that that first part would take as long, but I have to probably leave the Zoom in about 15 minutes for a family obligation, which I should have told you in the beginning, but I don't think this should take more than ten minutes anyway.

JUDGE VANASKIE: All right. Yes, I don't think we need to spend a lot of time on this question.

Who will be addressing it for the defense?

MR. GOLDBERG: Your Honor, this is Seth Goldberg. I am appearing by telephone today, I'm not on camera, and I will be handling this issue.

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JUDGE VANASKIE: All right. Thank you, Mr. Goldberg. My understanding is that the dispute on the duration is whether you should obtain or have the ability for the presumptive time limit of the deposition of seven hours increased by 75 percent I quess it is for translation; and the defense point of view is five hours total time, that would include translation time. So that would limit you to three and a half hours if you're increasing it for translation time, increasing the duration of the deposition for translation time. And my understanding, as well, is that five hours equates to the amount of time that you've all agreed to for purposes of conducting depositions when the witness is located in Macao. Is my understanding correct? MR. SLATER: It is. Yes. I think generally, I don't know that it was really an agreement, it was more just that was generally how long we would go each evening because we were starting around seven or so at night, and they usually ended around midnight, somewhere between 12, 1:00 in the morning, sometimes a little earlier, sometimes later. JUDGE VANASKIE: Okay. All right. Mr. Goldberg, is my understanding correct? MR. GOLDBERG: Your understanding as to the state of play, Your Honor, is correct. ZHP's position is that for this additional testimony, three and a half hours plus 75 percent should be sufficient.

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I don't know how much Your Honor wants to get into it. Obviously we've put it in our letter brief and I know Mr. Slater's short on time, but given that the original testimony on these very specific matters only took 40 minutes, at most, we are proposing three and a half hours, which would give them the 40 minutes plus another two hours or so to ask follow-up questions.

This is not, as we understand Your Honor's order, a re-do of a deposition and, therefore, we don't think that the presumptive seven-hour time limit should apply here. This is a special circumstance to provide plaintiffs with testimony on specific issues they claim they weren't able to obtain. And Your Honor circumscribed this testimony in that order to this very narrow playing field.

So we certainly think three and a half hours plus the deposition testimony is sufficient. It allows us to get in there and do this in one deposition session. The witness is going to have to travel from China to Macao, and while they have to provide the testimony, of course the burden is something to be considered. And the seven-hour deposition plus 75 percent actually results in 12 and a half hours of time. And so instead of a one-day session, the plaintiffs are proposing a three-session deposition, three separate days.

JUDGE VANASKIE: I understand. I understand that, Mr. Goldberg.

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Mr. Slater?

MR. SLATER: Yes, Your Honor.

We were very concerned when we saw the initial proposal and then when we saw this proposal for one evening because what we're concerned about is that these depositions are going to be -- or this deposition -- we've been told now there is going to be one witness produced, someone named Jucai Gu, who wasn't designated on any of these topics, is going to be basically running out the clock or at least that's what we don't want to happen. We don't want to start having conflict with defense counsel as the deposition goes if the witness is taking too long or the witness says she doesn't understand a question or wants to read a document for 30 minutes or whatever So what I am trying to do is take away an opportunity for a lot of stress between us and I think that the way we do that is to use the standard amount of time with the understanding that -- you know, I can commit that we are going to try to be reasonable about how we ask the questions but these topics -- you know, counsel says it took 40 minutes to ask those questions. Well, that's because the witnesses didn't answer them. That's why we're here. And ZHP, I think, is almost giddy, and I say this as respectfully as I can, obviously, they seem giddy about the outcome of this motion because their view is, well, we now have to go back into areas of the risk assessment, the change control process, the health

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risks, which Min Li didn't answer any questions on that, which may have been the biggest topic of all. He just deferred to a toxicologist the whole time. So who do they bring in to testify on that topic? Jucai Gu who is at the other end of the spectrum. So you're talking about major areas, and we don't know what the witness is going to say.

Your Honor, I think, assumed that when you entered your order that ZHP was probably going to say, fine, we can deem the following questions admitted because it seems so obvious that the answer should be yes, but here we are. And I think it's very telling that they don't agree to any of the questions as being admitted. They won't give us any idea of what the witnesses are going to say.

So if you put yourself in our shoes, how do we agree to a truncated timeframe when the subject matter is so significant and we don't know what the witnesses are going to say, we don't know how direct their answers are going to be.

So what we would like is to use the default time limit and I am sure that if the defense thinks that we abuse that or take too long, they will come to tell Your Honor. But the alternative of us starting a fight within minutes, potentially, of getting into the deposition or hours as to whether the time is being wasted, I'm just trying to avoid stress in all of our lives. I think that just opens the door to a real solid source of stress if we do that.

1 JUDGE VANASKIE: All right. Mr. Goldberg? 2 MR. GOLDBERG: Your Honor, I am comfortable standing 3 on the position that I expressed. Your Honor's order was 4 circumscribed to five specific matters. There were 24 5 excerpts, and if you look at those excerpts, most of the 6 questions were redundant. So the 40 minutes of testimony time 7 was actually generous. We're proposing to give that back plus 8 permit plaintiffs another two and a half hours of time for 9 follow-up questions. This is -- this is more than sufficient 10 given Your Honor's order that the questions should be 11 straightforward and the responses should be direct. If 12 plaintiffs find that they need more time, they can ask Your 1.3 Honor for more time. But three and a half hours is a 14 reasonable compromise to getting this deposition done and it's 15 a fair amount of time for both the parties and the witness to 16 get in there and do this deposition in one deposition day and 17 be done with it. 18 JUDGE VANASKIE: All right. Here's my concern: 19 I'm going to tell you, I'm going to use the default time of 20 seven hours for the deposition, inclusive of or plus the 75 21 percent for translation time. I'm only doing that to assure 22 that the deposition can be taken and complete. I don't expect 23 you're going to require all that time if the questions are 24 straightforward, as I said repeatedly in the order, and the 25 witness gives direct answers and responsive answers.

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shouldn't take that amount of time. But I want to get it done.
And by doing this, you'll have to schedule that witness for two
days to enable it to be done under the rules as you're
following them now about five hours of time and --
         MR. GOLDBERG: Your Honor, Your Honor, I'm sorry to
interrupt but I think we're missing something here.
         Judge Schneider issued an order for a seven-hour
deposition, a 30(b)(6) deposition, on seven 30(b)(6) topics,
entire topics.
               That was a seven-hour deposition. Plaintiffs
were able to complete all of the questioning for those seven
topics in seven hours.
         Your order is focused on specific facts, specific
questions, for five lines of questioning, and you're proposing
now to provide the same amount of time as that seven-30(b)(6)
topic seven-hour deposition.
         If plaintiffs can complete the questioning on seven
30(b)(6) topics in seven hours, surely they can complete the
questioning on five lines of questions, five lines of
questioning, five fact areas, which Your Honor ordered needed
to be specific, in three and a half hours.
         This is not, Your Honor, two days of deposition; this
is three days. The first day will be five hours, the second
day will be five hours, the witness will have to come back for
another two and a half hours.
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JUDGE VANASKIE: I don't expect that will happen.

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ahead, please complete.

MR. GOLDBERG: The way to get this deposition done, Your Honor, is to limit the amount of time because this is just going to be a -- this is going to become a fishing expedition far beyond the specific matters that Your Honor has ordered to be covered.

It seems as though there's nothing that ZHP can do to have a balance here. But the reality is this deposition is going to go far beyond what Your Honor's explicit -- the explicit terms of this order seemed to envision.

JUDGE VANASKIE: This deposition should not need to be taken. This deposition is being ordered as a sanction because witnesses were evasive, were nonresponsive to questions that I thought could have been answered much more directly.

I fully expect that this deposition can be completed within one day; but I am not going to allow a witness to filibuster, to be evasive, to run out the clock and then you come back and I'm getting a request for another day of deposition. This is intended to enable a deposition to be completed, period. I don't expect that it's going to take this amount of time. I haven't seen anything that would warrant my suspicion that the plaintiffs would now move beyond those five areas. I think it should be completed, as I said, within one evening, one night of questioning, but I'm not going to artificially limit it to that to provide an incentive to

1 filibuster.

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So this is how we will proceed with this deposition that's being taken as a sanction. And I've thought about this a lot and that's how we will proceed with this.

Plaintiffs will not be required to provide in advance of the deposition exhibits that they intend to use during the deposition. They're certainly free to do that to expedite the process, but I recognize the work product implications of such a directive and will not require it.

In terms of when the depositions are to be completed,
I understand that you have a tremendous amount of work on your
plates. I'm hopeful that it can be done by mid-April. I think
you've asked for late April or early May. I haven't seen
anything from the plaintiffs that has indicated that any of the
testimony is required in connection with the briefing that is
occurring now. So if it takes till late April, early May, so
be it, but they need to get scheduled and need to be completed.

I expect we can talk about scheduling of the deposition at a future status conference to get a schedule, but I ask you now to start working on getting the deposition scheduled. All right?

MR. SLATER: Thank you very much, Your Honor.

JUDGE VANASKIE: Anything else?

MR. GOLDBERG: Your Honor, yes, there is just one issue in terms of the exhibits. As you'll see in our letter,

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during these excerpts of testimony, the plaintiffs introduced maybe ten exhibits and asked about some of them, based their questions on some of them. They never — they were never prevented from introducing any other exhibits. And our request is that for this follow-up testimony on these specific matters, plaintiffs be limited to using those deposition exhibits that were previously introduced so that we are staying within these specific matters.

JUDGE VANASKIE: All right. Mr. Slater?

MR. SLATER: I don't know what the answers were going to be to the questions if they actually answered them. I certainly know that I had follow-up questions and to limit us to the exhibits that were used -- I'll give you an example. How do we do that with Min Li who wouldn't answer any questions? How do I limit myself to the exhibits I used, I'm speaking rhetorically, obviously, when I didn't even get into the lines of questions. The same happened with subjects of risk assessment, change control. What if someone says something and then I have to pull out a document to say, well, what you just said, let's look at the document you just implicated with that and so on and so forth. Again, it's an attempt to put us in a straightjacket over testimony that we don't know what they're going to say. So I don't think that would be equitable or reasonable.

JUDGE VANASKIE: Anything else, Mr. Goldberg?

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No, Your Honor, except it seems that it MR. GOLDBERG: is consistent with Your Honor's order to have this deposition limited to those specific inquiries, to have the exhibits that were previously asked about, the answers weren't obtained as to those documents, that the purpose of this is for them to get those answers, not to have an entire re-do on a new deposition. JUDGE VANASKIE: I agree it shouldn't be a re-do or an entirely new deposition. The plaintiffs are limited to the subject matters of the areas of questioning that are indicated in those excerpts. I expect they will stay to those subject matter areas or you can instruct your witness not to answer a question because it's gone beyond the areas for which we've allowed a re-deposition or a deposition of a witness. Certainly you can do that, Mr. Goldberg, but I'm not going to

the deposition. It may be that there's some document that takes on greater significance in light of other developments in the case that is relevant to the subject matter areas in question, it may be that a witness's answer leads to another document related to that matter. So I won't artificially limit it at this time. All right?

artificially limit at this time what exhibits can be used at

Anything else on the question of the re-deposition of the witnesses?

MR. SLATER: No, Your Honor. And I think that if the next topic I think might be the one we are going confidential

1.3

```
on, I am going to excuse myself. I am going to call in on that but I'm not arguing that issue. And I appreciate it, Your Honor. I'm sorry I didn't say something at the outset. I just forgot to and didn't think we'd go that long, but thank you very much.

JUDGE VANASKIE: All right. I think that's all I can address at this time with respect to the re-deposition of witnesses at this time.

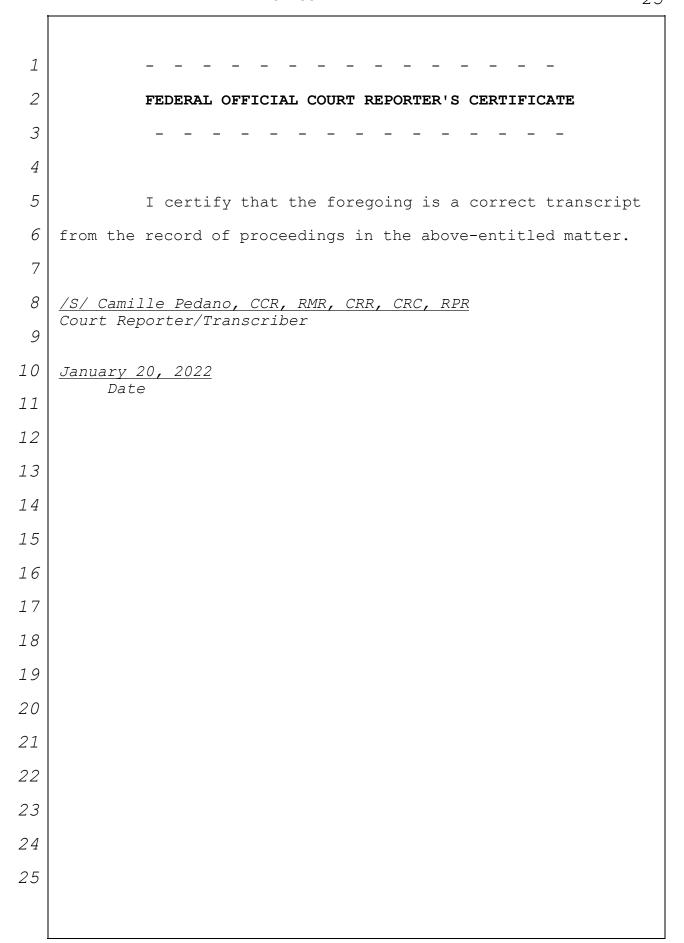
Is there anything else from the perspective of the defense or the perspective of the plaintiffs with respect to our call today other than the confidentiality issues?
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MR. HARKINS: Your Honor, this is Steve Harkins with Greenberg Traurig for the Teva defendants.

I don't believe this requires any argument but we did just want to confirm that last week the parties submitted briefing on the motion for expansion of time and just ask if the Court required anything further. I believe defendants are comfortable standing on the brief but just wanted to make sure that the Court had received that and that Your Honor didn't require anything further to render a decision there.

JUDGE VANASKIE: Mr. Harkins, I did receive letters from both sides. I had anticipated being able to discuss them at this time but the agenda letters for today took more time than I anticipated they would. So I'm not prepared to discuss it.

```
1
             If I think that I will require additional argument, I
 2
    will let you all know; but I fully anticipate being able to
 3
    decide that question on the basis of the briefs that have been
 4
    submitted.
 5
             MR. HARKINS: Understood. Thank you, Your Honor.
 6
             JUDGE VANASKIE: Thank you. All right. So we will
 7
    conclude -- Ms. Bonner, is there something you wanted to say?
 8
             MS. BONNER: Yes, Your Honor. I just wanted to
 9
    confirm what the confidential number was that we would be
10
    dialing into for the confidentiality argument. I wasn't sure
11
    if it's the one on the docket or a different number.
12
             JUDGE VANASKIE: Larry, are you still there?
1.3
             THE COURTROOM DEPUTY: I am, Judge. Just the one on
14
    the docket.
15
             JUDGE VANASKIE: Okay. So it's the one on the docket.
16
    So we will end this aspect of the call and ask you to dial in
17
    and we will have our in camera discussion. I intend to limit
18
    that discussion to the 11 documents that are at issue that are
19
    before me now. Okay?
20
             MS. BONNER: Okay. Thank you, Your Honor.
21
             JUDGE VANASKIE: Thanks.
22
             (These proceedings concluded at 4:40 p.m.)
23
24
25
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